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ABSTRACT

An administrator had a unique opportunity to participate in the founding of a Louisiana college by becoming the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Because many of the new staff were not experienced in their positions, she found herself mentoring many young people at the same time. It was a role with which she was most comfortable, partly because she had been a speech communication teacher and partly because she had enjoyed positive relationships with older people in her profession. In addition to drawing on her own past, this administrator turned to Norma Carr-Fuffino's "The Promotable Woman," a book that offers advice about mentoring. Carr-Fuffino offers 12 ways a mentor can help a protege, among them: (1) teach, advise, counsel, coach, guide, and sponsor; (2) give insights into business; (3) serve as a sounding board for decision-making; (4) be a constructive critic; (5) provide information for career advancement; and (6) show how to move effectively through the system. This administrator faced a challenging task because while she had to guide young women in high positions, at the same time she had to reckon with the situation where these same women would be providing the leadership to much more traditional older men who were somewhat uncomfortable with women in high places. Her being a woman in a leadership position helped to convey the message that the job would be done in the most effective way possible--regardless of the age, gender, and race of the participants. (Contains a syllabus of a course on community college leadership.) (TB)

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ED 385 869

MENTORING NEW ADMINISTRATORS

Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the

SOUTHERN SPEECH COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION

New Orleans, Louisiana

April 7, 1995

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Presented by:

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As a student of classical rhetoric, it is certainly comfortable for me to accept the role of mentor to the young people on my administrative staff. I like to think of Socrates mentoring Plato who then mentored Aristotle who in turn mentored Alexander the Great. The fact of one individual who achieved success leading the way for others to follow has long been part of the oral tradition and of communications.

Some years ago, in the late 1960's, I had the opportunity to live in Germany where the idea of mentoring was extremely popular. Young people often chose to do an apprenticeship in which a meister or mentor was the person responsible for their training, not only for learning the particular skills of a job, but for learning all of the responsibilities that surrounded holding a particular job.

Because I have worked for a long time in technical education, as well as in communication, I think I have always seen a valid purpose for someone who is well versed, well educated, and well trained in a job to support the people starting careers through a close association or mentoring relationship.

Just three years ago, I had the opportunity to participate in what has become the grand experiment of my life. After becoming most comfortable in a position that I had held and grown with for some 17 years, I was asked to move to a new college that was being created here in Louisiana and to help get it started by becoming the Vice President for Academic Affairs. This was no easy task since included in my first job duties was the task of creating an administrative staff which was largely dictated simply by the merger of two institutions that previously did not have large administrative staffs. In addition, I also had the responsibility for working with the faculty to develop community college level programs in technological courses that previously had been taught at a vocational technical level on a clock hour basis.

I am not sure why I took this challenge. I was certainly at a comfortable point in my life. My own children were nearing the end of their college careers, and my husband and I had just begun to reach a point where we could enjoy doing more things together. Perhaps I was just bored, or maybe I didn't think hard enough or long enough before I said yes. But at any rate, within a short time, I found myself deeply

entrenched in trying to create a very strong administrative staff with a group of largely young and inexperienced professionals who shared my eagerness to make this new college a success. Their eagerness, their willingness to learn, their unending energy to produce good results, all helped me to face this challenge and, yes, in fact to rather enjoy it.

Today I would like to share some of my feelings and experiences in mentoring young administrators. Certainly, as the good speech teacher, I must share with you three main points. These are strategies I felt were successful, a few that I wish I would have left undone, and some of the results I feel have come from our working together in a mentoring relationship. I feel we have produced a very high quality administrative team-that now I would be willing to send off as individuals or as a group to help create other community colleges in the state of Louisiana. Incidently, that is a task that many of the people on my staff may have the opportunity to do in the next two to three years.

I did not take on the task of mentoring a group of young people by choice; it was definitely due in part to necessity. Throughout my own career, I have had several excellent mentors. I often try to remember things they taught me or told me to help my career move forward. It was this reliance on my personal experiences that helped me to achieve a high level of mentoring with my young staff.

Let me digress for a moment and tell you something from my own experiences that led me to this point and helped me to mentor the young people that I have worked with for the past three years. I would have to say I have had three major mentors in my life. The first of these mentors was Waldo W. Braden, who was head of the Speech department at Louisiana State University (L.S.U.) for many years and was certainly instrumental in my decision to become a speech communication professional. It was not until many years after I left school that I could look back and realize how many times he had nudged, prodded or provoked me into to following a certain path, taking a certain course of action, or even accepting a certain position. He never directly stated to me that he was giving me directions or leading me along a

certain path, he seemed to manage to make it always come out of my mind that this was the thing I most wanted to do. I do remember at a time when I was graduating with my undergraduate degree and had been accepted into another major university to pursue a masters in an area other than speech communication. He called me into his office for a meeting "just to discuss the best course of action" for me. By the time I left, I had completed my application to enter the speech graduate program at L.S.U. I have always been very thankful for that day, and I think no decision was better for my life.

My second mentor was Jesse Smallwood. We were both born and raised in New Orleans, yet we were very unlikely partners, particularly for a mentoring relationship. She was an outstanding consultant in the field of health care as well as in education. At that time she worked for Author D. Little, one of the largest consulting firms in the country. The unique part of our relationship was that she had left New Orleans in the 1950's because of segregation; it happens that she is an African-American. She came back to New Orleans to direct a health study and was my supervisor in the consulting firm for which I worked for at that time. She taught me that for a woman, and in her case particularly a black woman, it was difficult to break through ceilings and that I had to expect, as a woman, to be willing to work twice as hard, not complain, and to assert myself at an appropriate time to show I had the ability to get things done. It was with her influence that I was made the coordinator of one of the largest studies on which we worked. I was very careful to observe and follow her every lead. Even though I returned to education many years ago, we remain friends to this day.

The third mentor that had great influence on my life is still my immediate supervisor and the head of the University of Louisiana System. Several years before I went to Nunez Community College, Dr. James Caillier became President of Delgado Community College. One day, very suddenly, he announced to a large group of faculty that I was going to leave the classroom and become the Director of Institutional Effectiveness. At the time, I was very taken back and thought, "I don't even know what the Director of

Institutional Effectiveness does." That did not seem to bother him a bit and within a short time I was quite sure and quite comfortable that I knew what to do and how to do it. His leadership and his coaching and his guidance helped me to develop very quickly a position that had not existed at the college prior to that time. He also is the person who is responsible for my taking the position I now hold.

By using the experiences I had with the people who mentored me, I felt I had an opportunity to assist several people to make some good decisions that would them move up the ladder in academia and in an administrative role in a very short period of time. Thus, the first strategy I used was to mentor to others in the way others had mentored me.

In the book,"The Promotable Woman," by Norma Carr-Ruffino, there is a list of things to anticipate in a mentoring relationship. Each of these has been somewhat important in all of the decisions I have made. I would like to briefly go through these with you now. First, Carr-Ruffino describes a mentor as an experienced person at a higher level who takes a promising younger person under wing as a protégé. According to Carr-Ruffino, the mentor takes a personal interest in the protégé that is almost parental in nature. It is usually above and beyond the normal professional relationship. Mentors are especially helpful in the areas of networking, professional development and self-enhancements. Carr-Ruffino states that there are twelve things that a mentor can help with. Each of these twelve are important to any young administrator.

- Teach, advise, counsel, coach, guide, and sponsor
- Give insights into the business
- Serve as a sounding board for decision-making
- Be a constructive critic
- Provide necessary information for career advancement

- Show how to move effectively through the system
- Help cut through red tape at times
- Teach the "political ropes" and introduce you to the right people
- Stand up for you in meetings or discussions with his or her peers; in case of controversy, fight for you
- Suggest you as a likely candidate when appropriate opportunities come along
- Increase your visibility; single you out from the crowd of competitors surrounding you and argue your virtues against theirs
- Provide an important signal to other people that you have his or her backing, helping to provide you with an aura of power and upward mobility

I try to incorporate these strategies into the work we do. I have learned that young administrators have to develop their own style and it is important for them to have the opportunity to stand or fall on their own merits. I cannot and will not try to make every decision for them.

However, I have tried to keep in mind that not every person you mentor has the same needs nor requires the same amount of guidance and coaching. Many of the people that work with me are quite capable of moving forward on their own. What they need from me is very little interference in what they are doing, but a lot of support for everything they attempt to do to improve their role in relationship to the administrative structure of the college.

Probably one of the unique things about the mentoring experience I am currently having and have been having for the last several years is that traditionally a mentoring relationship is between two people. In the case that I am trying to describe to you today, this relationship is with more than one person at a time. Let me go back to how this came to be. When Nunez Community College was formed, the legislature passed the legislation enacting the college on June 27, 1992. The college began operating on July 1, 1992. I actually became part of the team on July 7. Within no more than a week's time, a group

was put together that had to provide all the administrative services needed by a college. The result was that people were thrust into jobs for which they had little experience, and also for which they had very little choice in the position or role they were to take. The former counselor of the vocational technical school suddenly became the registrar, director of admissions, and financial aid officer. The former assistant director of the vocational school became the director of personnel and director of institutional effectiveness. One of the former English teachers suddenly found herself as the division chair of arts and sciences. A nursing instructor soon became the director of the health sciences division. Within a year's time we had hired a young graduate of an M.B.A. program to be the director of institutional research, and a young C.P.A. who was hired as a staff accountant, found herself the chief financial officer when another person was unable to accept the position.

I cannot tell you that these individuals have been able to fill their roles without some pain. They have all moved forward in their positions and are all eager to learn and eager to perform. One of the main things that has been needed for them to move forward in their new roles, has been the assurance that they had a support system above them. I try to provide the support they need.

One thing about this mentoring relationship that is probably somewhat unique in Louisiana, and certainly is not typical in other parts of the country, is that many of the administrative officials of the college are young women. This does not mean we don't have some traditionalists among us. The Vice President of Student Affairs, the Dean of Continuing Education, and the Director of Administrative Services are all middle aged white males.

In addition to the normal mentoring role, another element that I had to reckon with or recognize was how these young women were to handle themselves in an administrative council where often they were the ones providing the leadership to the much more traditional older men who were not accustomed to young women in high positions. I think my being a female president provided both groups with the opportunity to

understand that we are seeking to get the job done in the most efficient effective way possible and that age and gender, as well as race, have very little to do with one's ability to complete the tasks at hand. For all of us it has been a growing experience. It has been a challenge and it certainly has been rewarding. Today I feel quite comfortable that two or three of the women that are in our administrative chain could well become community college presidents within the next ten years. For them I think it is a role they did not even consider at the time their careers were drastically changed by the emergence of a community college.

Mentoring is an interesting phenomenon. We forget that in many countries and many cultures the parents mentored the children into roles that they wished for them to follow. In a mentoring situation in academia, particularly in administration, one has to put aside any differences that might be apparent in order to move the mentoring situation forward. I don't expect that all of my young administrators are going to follow in my footsteps, thinking that my way is the only way that something should be done. One of the things I have most wanted to instill in them is the responsibility of their independence of decision making so that they would not be bound by decisions they did not agree with or they did not concur with at a particular moment. I encourage open discussions. I encourage them to tell me when I am wrong. I have tried to set the example for them, that while I like to think I am right most of the time, never would I believe I am right all of the time. Perhaps this has been one of the most challenging experiences because these young women in no way feel threatened or intimidated about walking in my office and giving me their opinions at an appropriate times.

Before I close, I would like to add another segment that is currently developing at my institution. Many years ago, I guess about ten years ago now, I taught a young man in class who was a baseball player. He was particularly good in communications and also was one of my advisees. In our discussions I often joked with him, but with a serious tone beneath it, that at some point I expected to have him come

back and teach for me. He completed his degree, and went on to a four year institution, and got his bachelors. We remained in touch, in fact he came back and worked on a video about the school as an alumnus. It was not without surprise when one day he walked into my office at Nunez Community College and said Dr. Hopson, "I am looking for a job." It so happened at the moment he came in I was looking for a Carl Perkins coordinator who would be an outreach counselor to develop programs for urban youths. During the following three weeks this young man was interviewed and I somehow managed not to interject my opinion, but I was really hoping he would be the person the search committee would recommend. Normally, a search team recommends the top three candidates from which a final choice is made. I was indeed delighted when he was among the three, and not only among the three, but first on the list. So I find myself now in the position of becoming a mentor to a young person who has a fantastic future and who has many opportunities to move up administratively in the college.

At the beginning I told you I was going to talk about strategies that worked, some that didn't, and some of the results. Now at the end I find that I have given information on what I have done successfully and very little on what has not worked. Perhaps that is because we do not see the results in all things immediately. However, one stumbling block I would avoid in the future concerns older, more experienced administrators. I was somewhat disappointed when on administrator asked for an appointment with me. He came to plead with me to eliminate the current administrative council and to replace it with only the top four administrators. "After all," he confessed, "we should be making the decisions at the top and passing them along to junior administrators." He feels that his many years of hard work and effort are somehow negated when others become part of the decision-making process without excluding younger and newer administrators. As far as I know, the future Plato, Aristotle, and "Alexandria" the Great may be sitting at my administrative council right now. I know I am no Socrates, but I do have great hope for the future of the administration at Nunez Community College because of the outstanding young administrators. They are

the future.

I have included a copy of a syllabus that I used early on in a course for my staff to help create a strong foundation. Because I had some administrators at that time who had never held any high level administrative role and were now thrust into one, I taught a one semester, three credit hour course on leadership and administration. This course was designed to cover all aspects of the college, and to create positive interpersonal communication between all parties. All administrators and some faculty were given the opportunity to take the class. Over twenty people enrolled.

Each activity in the course was designed to bring an experienced administrator, a novice administrator and several others from non-related areas to work as a team to research and present needed information. This was found to be very successful. Now we are considering using the same method as we prepare for our re-affirmation from the Commission on Colleges.

I think these might be of some advantage to you as you look at this role and how it might be beneficial to you and stumbling blocks you might want to avoid. Whether you are in either the mentor or the protégé role in a relationship, mentoring can be a very positive experience if you are always aware that like every relationship it has its ups and downs. Try to avoid the downs and look for more ways to incorporate some of the ups in what you do.

Nunez Community College

COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP
SYLLABUS

EDUCATION 295-1

Instructor:

Carol S. Hopson, Ph.D.

Nunez Community College

COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP SYLLABUS
EDUC 295-1
Carol S. Hopson, Instructor

Course Overview:

It is the purpose of this course to develop a foundation for leadership roles in community college administration. Each student is expected to share his/her expertise in a given area with the group and to participate in other groups as an outside observer.

Each group will present information to the class as assigned. Class discussions will follow each presentation.

By the end of this course, the student will have an understanding of the community college movement in the United States and will know the major administrative subdivisions of Nunez Community College and will have a better perception of the role and duties of individual functions of the college.

Week

1 Overview of the beginnings of the community college movement in the United States. Synopsis of the various systems which are found today with emphasis on Texas, Florida, Illinois, and California. Lecture and class discussion.

Assignment for next class:

Read the section in the Nunez catalog on mission and read the mission statement of one other community college. Be prepared to discuss these.

2 ACTIVITY:

The role, scope, and mission of community colleges with emphasis on Nunez. A look at the changing role of higher education including a review of some of the dialogue over the new higher education act. Lecture and class discussion.

ASSIGNMENT:

Teams will be assigned for the following group projects which will be presented in class. Each group will have one to two hours for the presentation which will be followed by class discussion. Each person will be assigned to two teams. One team will be related to your work assignment and the other will be a new area.

ACTIVITY - Report of team on:

1. Admissions, financial aid and registration, class discussion,
2. The role of division chairs,
3. Curriculum and academic affairs,

4. Institutional advancement
5. College advisory committees,
6. Public relations, and
7. The community college library.

ASSIGNMENT - Read all handouts and be prepared to discuss

8. Evaluation - upward and downward,
9. Working with and gaining board approval,
10. T.Q.M., C.Q.M., teams, and other "quality controls,"
11. The emergence of institutional effectiveness,
12. Computer networking and media, and
13. Upward and downward articulation.

ACTIVITY - Report of team on:

3 Admissions, financial aid and registration, class discussion.

4 The role of division chairs. Guest speakers will also speak.

5 Curriculum and academic affairs - program development and review.

6 Institutional advancement (includes public and private grants, foundations and other funding sources) college advisory committees and public relations.

7 The community college library as a main stay of the institution.

ASSIGNMENT- Read all handouts and be prepared to discuss:

8 Evaluation - upward and downward. Working with and gaining board approval.

9 Upward and downward articulation.

10 T.Q.M, C.Q.M., Teams, and other "quality controls."

11 The affairs of the college - administrative, academic, student and business.

12 Field trip to three Mississippi Community Colleges.

ASSIGNMENT -

13 Students will submit a two to three page critical paper on the areas observed on the field trip.

14 The importance of SACS and other accrediting agencies as well as the role of AACC. Will these remain?

15 The emergence of institutional effectiveness, computer networking and media, in the community college.

16 The role of the president - A personal view.

17 Final Exam.

Attendance Policy:

Since each class covers a specific area, it is imperative that you attend every class. If it is not possible for you to attend a class you must demonstrate the efforts that you have made to cover the missed material. Excessive absences will affect your final grade.

Text books:

There is no specified text for this class. However, there will be many handouts given in class. You should have a binder to hold all of the handouts.

Grading Policy:

This is a high participation course. Therefore, a good part of your final grade will be based on participation.

Final Exam	= 20%
Team Projects (2)	= 40%
Report of Field Trip	= 15%
Class Participation	= 25%
	100%

Library:

It is expected that students in this class will use the library for research and for source information.